

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KHARTO 00082 091539Z

46

ACTION SS-25

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O 091423Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 913

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL ASMARA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T KHARTOUM 0082

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ET, US, SU

SUBJECT: RELEASE KAGNEW 2: ELF APPEAL TO USG

REF: KHARTOUM 0079

BEGIN SUMMARY: RELEASE KAGNEW 2 THROUGH GOOD OFFICES
GOS SUPPORTS USG VIEW THAT SUDANESE BEST ABLE INFLUENCE
ELF ON THIS CASE. APPROPRIATE USG RESPONSE TO GOS IS NOW
REPEAT NOW CLEARLY INDICATED. DEPT MAY WISH ADOPT LOW KEY
PRESS TREATMENT UNTIL MEN REACH FRANKFURT AND SINCE THIRD
HOSTAGE REMAINS IN ELF HANDS. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER MEETING FONMIN AHMED ON SEPARATE SUBJECT 1145
JAN 9, HE SAID FIRST VICE PRESIDENT BAGHIR WOULD LIKE TO SEE ME.
GREETING ME WARMLY, BAGHIR SAID HE HAD GOOD NEWS: TWO
AMERICANS (BOWIDOWICZ AND STRICKLAND) HAD BEEN RELEASED AND WERE
NOW IN KHARTOUM BEING LOOKED AFTER BY GOS. HE ALSO WISHED
INFORM ME THAT ELF IS GROUP CURRENTLY HOLDING MICHALKE.
FONMIN PROPOSED THAT TWO MEN BE BROUGHT TO BAGHIR'S OFFICE
AND TURNED OVER TO ME WHICH WAS DONE BY SECURITY CHIEF
ABDUL WAHAB, IN PRESENCE BAGHIR AND AHMED, APPROXIMATELY
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 KHARTO 00082 091539Z

1300 HOURS.

2. WHILE PAIR BROUGHT TO OFFICE, BAGHIR TOLD ME THE HAD RECEIVED WRITTEN MESSAGE FROM ELF ASKING HIM MAKE TWO POINTS TO US IN CONJUNCTION RELEASE BOWIDOWICZ AND STRICKLAND. FIRST, ELF UNDERSTOOD USG HAD RECENTLY SIGNED AGREEMENT WITH EPMG CALLING FOR ADDITIONAL \$300 MILLION IN ARMS AID. ELF WISHED USG TO BE AWARE THAT AMERICAN-RPVODIED WEAPONS ALREADY BEING USED BY EPMG TO DESTROY ERITREAN VILLAGES AND KILL ERITREANS (KAGNEW 2 SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD ME FOUR ERITREAN VILLAGES HAD BEEN HEAVILY BOMBED BY ETHIOPIAN AIR FORCE WITHIN TWO HOURS OF THEIR HAVING LEFT EACH VILLAGE). FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS, AND IN RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT NIMEIRI'S PERSONAL APPEAL, ELF WAS NVERTHELESS RELEASING PAIR TO US BUT DID WISH USG UNDERSTAND THE DEEP ERITREAN CONCERN REGARDING CONTINUED USG MILITARY AID TO ETHIOPIA.

3. BAGHIR CONTINUED, SECONDLY, THAT GOS (AND, HE IMPLIED ELF) UNDERSTAND OUR POSITION ON REFUSING ACQUIESCE IN BLACKMAIL ON PART THOSE HOLDING AMERICAN CITIZENS. HOWEVER, ELF BADLY IN NEED OF FOODSTUFFS AND MEDICINES. ELF HAD EXPRESSED HOPE THAT SUCH SUPPLIES MIGHT BE PROVIDED BY USG IN WAKE RELEASE KAGNEW 2. BAGHIR EMPHASIZED PRESIDENT NIMEIRI WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF POSITIVE RESPONSE WERE FORTHCOMING. AMONG OTHER THINGS, THIS WOULD HAVE MAJOR IMPACT ON MODIFYING CURRENT ERITREAN ILL WILL AGAINST AMERICANS. FONMIN AHMED INTERJECTED THAT, WHILE USG MIGHT FIND IT DIFFICULT UNDERTAKE SUCH HELP, IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF SUPPLIES WERE FORTHCOMING FROM SOME PRIVATE AMERICAN CHARITY.

4. EXPRESSING GRATIFICATION THAT LONG TRAVAIL OF AT LEAST TWO OF THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES HAS NOW ENDED, I REPLIED THAT I WAS CERTAIN PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY WOULD WISH ME EXPRESS PERSONAL APPRECIATION TO BAGHIR FOR PROTRACTED AND EFFECTIVE GOS SUPPORT IN FREEING TWO MEN. I WOULD, OF COURSE, IMMEDIATELY PASS ON TO DEPT ELF APPEAL AS RELAYED BY BAGHIR. HOWEVER, CURRENT ELF DETENTION THIRD AMERICAN OBVIOUSLY COMPLICATING FACTOR. ALL THESE AMERICAN CITIZENS HAD BEEN SEIZED BY ERITREANS FROM THEIR HOMES OR PLACES OF WORK. OTHER AMERICANS REMAINED IN ASMARA AS HOSTAGES TO FORTUNE. USG WOULD NOT NEGOTIATE OR YIELD TO BLACKMAIL WHEN AMERICAN HOSTAGES WERE TAKEN.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 KHARTO 00082 091539Z

ERITREAN GROUPS SHOULD RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT THIS FUNDAMENTAL FACT. CONTINUED EXPLOITATION BY ELF OF PRESENCE DEFENSELESS AMERICANS IN ASMARA SHOULD NOW REPEAT NOW BE ACCEPTED BY THEM AS NON-STARTER. ELF POSITION IN EYES AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION WOULD BE STRENGTHENED IF MICHALKE COULD BE RELEASED PROMPTLY. PLF SHOULD ACT SIMILARLY BY RELEASING CISCO 2. I SAID I HOPED ELF WOULD BE APPRISED THROUGH ITS GOS CONTACTS OF HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS FOR THEM RELEASE MICHALKE PROMPTLY

IF THEY WISHED OBTAIN MAXIMUM PUBLIC RESPONSE FROM RELEASE KAGNEW 2. BAGHIR SAID HE AGREED BUT NOTED MICHALKE CAPTURED ONLY RECENTLY, THAT ELF COMMUNICATIONS WERE RUDIMENTARY AND THAT IT MIGHT TAKE CONSIDERABLE TIME FOR POLICY GROUP TO BE ASSEMBLED AND TAKE DECISION IN THIS NEW CASE. I REPLIED THIS MIGHT WELL BE TRUE BUT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR DEPT REACT AS POSITIVELY OVER RELEASE BOWIDOWICZ AND STRICKLAND AS IT WOULD IF ALL THREE WERE RELEASED.

5. AS TO ELF ALLEGATION NEW \$300 MILLION USG ARMS DEAL WITH EPMG, I TOLD BAGHIR, AS I HAD TOLD NIMEIRI, THAT ONLY TRANS-ACTION RE ARMS OF WHICH I AWARE IN MORE THAN A YEAR HAD BEEN USG APPROVAL EXPORT LICENSE LAST FEBRUARY COVERING \$7 MILLION WORTH OF AMMUNITION. STRESSED TO BAGHIR, AS I HAD TO NIMEIRI, WHY THIS ACTION HAD BEEN TAKEN. AS MILITARY MAN, BAGHIR ACCEPTED FACT THAT USG MILITARY AID ARRANGEMENTS, TO BE EFFECTIVE, CANNOT BE TURNED ON AND OFF LIKE A FAUCET FOR PARTICULAR POLICY PURPOSES.

6. I THEN APPRISED BAGHIR THAT DEPT HAD AGREED MAKE STATEMENT UPON RELEASE KAGNEW 2 (STATE 258218) BUT THAT, SINCE THIRD HOSTAGE NOW INTRODUCED INTO ELF EQUATION, I COULD NOT BE CERTAIN SUCH STATEMENT WOULD BE ISSUED AS DRAFTED. IN EVENT THIS NOT DONE, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF APPROPRIATE EXPLANATION COULD BE PASSED TO ELF. BAGHIR SAID HE UNDERSTOOD.

7. COMMENT: RELEASE TWO MEN WAS OBVIOUSLY ORCHESTRATED BY GOS TO GAIN MAXIMUM KUDOS FROM USG. FACT REMAINS, HOWEVER, THAT SUDANESE HAVE BEEN WORKING STEADILY TO THIS END FOR UPWARDS OF THREE MONTHS. IT SEEMS CERTAIN THAT KAGNEW 2 COULD NOT HAVE BEEN RELEASED, EVEN NOW, HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR SUDANESE PERSISTENCE. BOTH FOR THIS REASON, AND FURTHER TO ENCOURAGE GOS TO PURSUE CASES OF REMAINING HOSTAGES, I
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SECRET

PAGE 04 KHARTO 00082 091539Z

BELIEVE TIME HAS COME FOR PROMPT AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE FROM WASHINGTON TO SHOW APPRECIATION OF GOS EFFORTS. ACCORDINGLY, I RECOMMEND CONSIDERATION AGAIN BE GIVEN TO REMOVING EXISTING HOLDS ON NORMAL CONSIDERATION OF AT LEAST PL 480 AND RESIDENT DATT. ALSO, PROVIDED THIS HAS BEEN DONE ELSEWHERE IN SIMILAR CASES OF EFFECTIVE THIRD COUNTRY INTERCESSION TO RELEASE AMERICAN HOSTAGES, SUGGEST SOME PERSONAL MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION BE SENT FROM SECRETARY TO VP BAGHIR (NIMEIRI LEAVING FOR LONDON JANUARY 10 REPEAT 10). AS TO PRESS TREATMENT, DO NOT BELIEVE GOS WILL ISSUE FORMAL STATEMENT AND WE WEEKING SEND PAIR ON FROM KHARTOUM BEFORE THEIR PRESENCE EXCITES PUBLIC INTEREST. TO THIS END, I RECOMMEND DEPT AVOID INITIATING PUBLIC STATEMENT UNTIL MEN HAVE REACHED FRANKFURT THOUGH FACT THEIR RELEASE CAN OF COURSE BE CONFIRMED IF ASKED.

BREWER

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